

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

THE CRUCIFIXION OF PHILIP STRONG.

By REV. CHARLES M. SHELTON,
Author of "In His Steps: What Would Jesus Do?" "Malcolm Kirk," "Robert Hardy's Seven Days," etc.

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But the people of Milton were deeply stirred by the address. They were not in the habit of hearing that kind of preaching. And what was more, the whisky element was roused. It was not in the habit of having its authority attacked in that bold, almost savage manner. For years its sway had been undisturbed. It had insolently established itself in power until even those citizens who knew its thoroughly evil character were deceived into the belief that nothing better than licensing it was possible. The idea that the saloon could be banished, removed, driven out altogether, had never before been advocated in Milton. The conviction that whether it could be ought to be suppressed had never gained ground with any number of people. They had endured it as a necessary evil. Philip's sermon, therefore, felt something like a bomb into the whisky camp. Before the report of the sermon had spread all over the town. The saloon men were enraged. Ordinarily they would have paid no attention to anything a church or a preacher might say or do. But Philip spoke from the pulpit of the largest church in Milton. The whisky men knew that if the large churches should all unite to fight them they would make it very uncomfortable for them and in the end probably drive them out. Philip went home that Sunday night after the evening service with several bitter enemies. The whisky men contributed one element. Some



This time Philip fell.

of his own church members made up another. He had struck again at the same spot which he had wounded the month before. In his attack on the saloon as an institution he had again necessarily condemned all those members of his church who rented property to the whisky element. Again, as a month ago, these property holders went from the hearing of the sermon angry that they as well as the saloon power were under indictment.

As Philip entered on the week's work after that eventful sermon he began to feel the pressure of public feeling against him. He began to realize the bitterness of championing a just cause alone. He felt the burden of the community's sin in the matter, and more than once he felt obliged to come in from his parish work and go up into his study, there to commune with his Father. He was growing old very fast in these first few weeks in his new parish.

Tuesday evening of that week Philip had been writing a little while in his study, where he had gone immediately after supper. It was nearly 8 o'clock when he happened to remember that he had promised a sick child in the home of one of his parishioners that he would come and see him that very day.

He came down stairs, put on his hat and overcoat and told his wife where he was going.

"It's not far. I shall be back in about half an hour, Sarah."

He went out, and his wife held the door open until he was down the steps. She was just on the point of shutting the door as he started down the side walk when a sharp report rang out close by. She screamed and flung the door open again, as by the light of the street lamp she saw Philip stagger and then leap into the street toward an elm tree which grew almost opposite the parsonage. When she came to the middle of the street, she was horrified to see a man step out boldly from behind the tree, raise a gun and deliberately fire at Philip again. This time Philip fell and did not rise. His tall form lay where the rays of the street lamp shone on it, and he had fallen so that as his arms stretched out there he made the figure of a huge and prostrate cross.

CHAPTER V.

As people waked up in Milton the Wednesday morning after the shooting of Philip Strong they grew conscious of the fact, as the news came to their knowledge, that they had been nursing for 50 years one of the most brutal and cowardly institutions on earth and licensing it to do the very thing which at last it had done. For the time being Milton suffered a general shock. Long pent up feeling against the whisky power burst out, and public sentiment for once condemned the source of the cowardly attempt to murder.

Various rumors were flying about. It was said that Mr. Strong had been stabbed in the back while out making parish calls in company with his wife and that she had been wounded by a pistol shot herself. It was also said that he had been shot through the heart and instantly killed. But all these confused reports were finally set at rest when those calling at the parsonage brought away the exact truth.

The first shot fired by the man from behind the tree struck Philip in the knee, but the ball glanced off. He felt the blow and staggered, but his next

impulse was to rush in the direction of the sound and disarm his assailant. That was the reason he had leaped into the street. But the second shot was better aimed, and the bullet crashed into his upper arm and shoulder, shattering the bone and producing an exceedingly painful, though not fatal, wound. The shock caused Philip to fall, and he fainted away, but not before the face of the man who had shot him was clearly stamped on his mind. He knew that he was one of the saloon proprietors whose establishment Philip had visited the week before. He was a man with a harelip, and there was no mistaking his countenance.

When the people of Milton learned that Philip was not fatally wounded, their excitement cooled a little. A wave of indignation, however, swept over the town when it was learned that the would-be murderer was recognized by the minister, and it was rumored that he had openly threatened that he would "fix the cussed preacher so that he would not be able to preach again."

Philip, however, felt more full of fight against the rum devil than ever. As he lay on the bed the morning after the shooting he had nothing to regret or fear. The surgeon had been called at once, as soon as his wife and the alarmed neighbors had been able to carry him into the parsonage. The fact had been removed and the wounds dressed. By noon he had recovered somewhat from the effects of the operation and was resting, although very weak from the shock and suffering considerable pain.

"What is that stain on the floor, Sarah?" he asked as his wife came in with some article for his comfort.

Philip lay where he could see into the other room.

"It is your blood, Philip," replied his wife, with a shudder. "It dripped like a stream from your shoulder as we carried you in last night. Oh, Philip, it is dreadful! It seems to me like an awful nightmare. Let us move away from this terrible place. You will be killed if we stay here."

"There isn't much danger if the rest of 'em are as poor shots as this fellow," replied Philip. "Now, little woman, he went on cheerfully, 'don't worry. I don't believe they'll try it again.'"

Mrs. Strong controlled herself. She did not want to break down while Philip was in his present condition.

"You must not talk," she said as she smoothed his hair back from the pale forehead.

"That's pretty hard on a preacher, don't you think, Sarah? My occupation is going to be 'can't'."

"Then I'll talk for two. They say that most women can do that."

"Will you preach for me next Sunday?"

"What, and make myself a target for saloon keepers? No, thank you. I have half a mind to forbid you ever preaching again. It will be the death of you."

"It is the life of me, Sarah. I would not ask anything better than to die with the armor on, fighting evil. Well, all right. I won't talk any more. I suppose there's no objection to my thinking a little?"

"Thinking is the worst thing you can do. You just want to lie there and do nothing but get well."

"All right. I'll quit everything except eating and sleeping. Put up a little placard on the head of the bed saying: 'Biggest curiosity in Milton! A live minister who has stopped thinking and talking! Admission 10 cents! Proceeds to be devoted to teach saloon keepers how to shoot straight!'"

Philip was still somewhat under the influence of the doctor's anesthetic, and as he faintly murmured this absurd sentence he fell into a slumber which lasted several hours, from which he awoke very feeble and realizing that he would be confined to the house for some time, but feeling in good spirits and thankful out of the depths of his vigorous nature that he was still spared to do God's will on earth.

The next day he felt strong enough to receive a few visitors. Among them was the chief of police, who came to inquire concerning the identity of the man who had done the shooting. Philip then showed a reluctance to witness against his enemy. It was only when he remembered that he owed a duty to society as well as to himself that he described the man and related minutely the entire affair exactly as it occurred.

"Is the man in town?" asked Philip.

"Has he not fled?"

"I think I know where he is," replied the officer. "He's in hiding, but I can find him. In fact, we have been hunting for him since the shooting. He is wanted on several other charges."

Philip was pondering something in silence. At last he said:

"When you have arrested him, I wish you would bring him here if it can be done without violating any ordinance or statute."

The officer stared at the request, and the minister's wife exclaimed: "Philip, you will not have that man come into the house! Besides, you are not well enough to endure a meeting with the wretch."

"Sarah, I have a good reason for it. Really, I am well enough. You will bring him, won't you? I do not wish to make any mistake in the matter. Before the man is really confined under a criminal charge of attempt to murder I would like to confront him at rest when those calling at the parsonage brought away the exact truth."

The officer finally promised that, if he could do so without attracting too much attention, he would comply with the request. It was a thing he had never done before. He was not quite easy in his mind about it. Nevertheless Philip expressed a winning influence over all sorts and conditions of men, and he felt quite sure that if the officer could arrest his man quietly he would bring him to the parsonage.

This was Thursday night. The next evening, just after dark, the bell rang, and one of the church members who had been staying with Mr. Strong during the day went to the door. There stood two men. One of them was the chief of police. He inquired how the minister was and said that he had a man with him whom the minister was anxious to see.

Philip heard them talking and guessed who they were. He sent his wife out to have the men come in. The officer with him came into the bedroom where Philip lay, still weak and suffering, but at his request propped up a little with pillows.

"Well, Mr. Strong, I have got the man, and here he is," said the officer, wondering what Philip would want of him. "I ran him down in the 'crow's nest' below the mills, and we popped him into a hack and drove right up here with him. And a pretty sweet specimen he is, I can tell you! Take off your hat and let the gentleman have another look at the brave chap who fired at him in ambush."

The officer spoke almost brutally, forgetting for a moment that the prisoner's hands were manacled. Remembering it the next instant, he pulled off the man's hat, while Philip looked calmly at the features. Yes, it was the same hideous, brutal face, with the harelip, which had shone up in the rays of the street lamp that night. There was no mistaking it for any other.

"Why did you want to kill me?" asked Philip after a significant pause. "I never did you any harm."

"I would like to kill all the cussed preachers," replied the man hoarsely.

"You confess, then, that you are the man who shot me?"

"I don't confess anything. What are you talking to me for? Take me to the lockup if you're going to!" the man exclaimed fiercely, turning to the officer.

"Philip," cried his wife, turning to him with a gesture of appeal, "send them away! It will do no good to talk to that man!"

Philip raised his hand in a gesture toward the man that made every one in the room feel a little awed. The officer, in speaking of it afterward, said: "I tell you, boys, I never felt quite the same except once, when the old Catholic priest stepped up to the platform with old man Gower time he was indicted upon me for I saw your face very plainly by the light of the street lamp. Now, all that I wanted to see you here for before you were taken to jail was to let you know that I do not bear any hatred toward you. The thing you have done is against the law of God and man. The injury you have inflicted upon me is very slight compared with that against your own soul. Oh, my brother man, why should you try to harm me because I denounce your business? Do you not know in your heart of hearts that the saloon is so evil in its effects that a man who loves his home and his country must oppose it? And yet I love you. That is possible because you are human. Oh, my Father," Philip continued, changing his appeal to the man by an almost natural manner into a petition to the Infinite, "make this soul dear to thee, to behold thy love for him, and make him see that it is not against me, a mere man, that he has indicted upon me, but against the purity and holiness and affection! Oh, my God, thou who didst come in the likeness of sinful men to seek and save that which was lost, stretch out the arms of thy salvation now to this child and save him from himself, from his own disbelief, his hatred of me or of what I have said! Thou art our Father, and I am thy child. We have all souls of men in the protecting, enfolding embrace of thy boundless compassion and infinite mercy."

There was a moment of entire quiet in the room, and then Philip said faintly: "Sarah, I cannot say more. Only tell the man I bear him no hatred and commend him to the love of God."

Mrs. Strong looked at Philip's appearance. The scene had been too much for his strength. She hastily commanded the officer to take his prisoner away and with the help of her friend cared for the minister, who, after the faintest rattle, rallied and then gradually sank into sleep that proved more refreshing than any he had yet enjoyed since the night of the shooting.

The next day found Philip improving more rapidly than Mrs. Strong had thought possible. She forbade him the sight of all callers, however, and insisted that he must keep quiet. His wounds were healing satisfactorily, and when the surgeon called he expressed himself much pleased with his patient's appearance.

"Say, doctor, do you really think I would set me back any to think a little?"

"No. I never heard of anything hurtling people. I have generally considered it a healthy habit."

"The reason I asked," continued Philip gravely, "was because my wife absolutely forbade it, and I was wondering how long I could keep it up and fool anybody."

"That's a specimen of his stubbornness," said the minister's wife, smiling. "Why, only a few minutes before you came in he was insisting that he could preach tomorrow. Think of it, a man with a shattered shoulder, who would have to stand on one leg and do all his gesturing with his left hand; a man who can't preach without the use of seven or eight arms and as many pockets and has to walk up and down the platform like a lion when he gets started on his delivery! And yet he wants to preach tomorrow! He's that stubborn that I don't know that I can keep him at home. You would better leave some powder to put him to sleep, and we will keep him in a state of unconsciousness until Monday morning."

"Now, doctor, just listen to me awhile. Mrs. Strong is talking for two women, as she agreed to do, and that puts me in a hard position. But I want to know how soon I can get to work again."

"You will have to lie there a month," said the doctor bluntly.

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"Impossible! I never lied that time in my life!" said Philip solemnly.

"It would serve him right," to perform a surgical operation on him for that, wouldn't it, Mrs. Strong?" the surgeon appealed to her.

"I think he deserves the worst you can do, doctor."

"But say, dear people, I can't stay here a month. I must be about my master's business. What will the church do for supplies?"

"Don't worry, Philip. The church will take care of that."

But Philip was already eager to get to work. Only the assurance of the surgeon that he might possibly get out in a little over three weeks satisfied him.

Somebody from a neighboring town happened to be visiting in Milton occupied the pulpit, and Philip had a quiet, restful day. He started in the week determined to beat the doctor's time for recovery, and, having a remarkably strong constitution and a tremendous will, he made fair to be limping about the house in two weeks. His shoulder wound healed very fast. His knee bothered him, and it seemed likely that he would go lame for a long time. But he was not concerned about that if only he could go about in any sort of fashion once more.

Wednesday of that week he was surprised and somewhat shocked to see even which did more than anything else to hasten his recovery. He was still confined to bed down stairs when in the afternoon the bell rang, and Mrs. Strong went to the door, supposing it was one of the church people come to inquire about the minister. She found instead Alfred Burke, Philip's old college friend, who had been up to public court of seeming to ride a hobby, of being a man of one idea and making people tired of him because he harped on one string. He had uttered his denunciation, and he would wait a little before he spoke again. The whisky power was not the only bad thing in Milton that needed to be attacked. There were other things which must be said. And so Philip slipped into his pulpit the third Sunday of the month and preached on a general theme, to the disappointment of a great crowd almost as large as the last one he had faced. And yet his very appearance was a sermon in itself against the institution he had held up to public condemnation at that occasion. His knee wound proved very stubborn, and he limped badly. That in itself spoke eloquently of the dastardly attempt on his life. His face was pale, and he had grown thin. His shoulder was stiff, and the enforced quietness of his delivery contrasted strangely with his customary fiery eloquence on the platform. Altogether that first Sunday of his reappearance in his pulpit was a stronger sermon against the saloon than anything he could have spoken or written.

When the first Sunday in the next month came on, Philip was more like his old self. He had gained strength enough to go around two Sunday afternoons and note for himself the destruction of the day as it went on. He saw it all in all it seemed to him that the church in Milton was practically doing nothing to stop the evil. All the ministers complained of the difficulty of getting an evening congregation. Yet hundreds of young people walked past all the churches every Sunday night, bent on pleasure, going to the theaters or concerts or parties, which seemed to have no trouble in attracting the crowd. Especially this was true of the foreign population, who were getting more and more numerous in the town. It was a common occurrence for dog fights, cock fights and shooting matches of various kinds to be going on in the tenement district on Sunday, and the police seemed powerless or careless in the matter.

All this burned into Philip like molten metal, and when he faced his people on the Sunday which was becoming a noted Sunday for them he quivered with the earnestness and thrill which always came to a sensitive man when he feels sure he has a sermon which must be preached and a message which the people must hear for their lives.

He took for a text Christ's words, "The Sabbath was made for man, and at once defined its meaning as a special day."

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men into closer and dearer relation to spiritual life, to teach men larger, sweeter truths of existence and of God and leave them better fitted to take up the duties of everyday business."

"Now, it is plain to me that if Christ were here today and pastor of Calvary church he would feel compelled to say some very plain words about the desecration of Sunday in Milton. Take, for example, the opening of the fruit stands and cigar stores and meat markets every Sunday morning. What is the one reason why these places are open this very minute while I am speaking? There is only one reason—so that the owners of the places may sell their goods and make money. They are not satisfied with what they can make six days in the week. Their greed seizes on the one day which ought to be used for the rest and worship of men and turns that also into a day of merchandise. Do we need any other fact to convince us of the terrible selfishness of the human heart?"

"Or take the case of the saloons. What right have they to open their doors in direct contradiction to the town ordinance forbidding it? And yet this ordinance is held by them in such contempt that this very morning as I came to this church I passed more than half a dozen of these sections of hell, wide open to any poor sinning soul that might be enticed therein. Citizens of Milton, where does the responsibility rest for this violation of the law? Does it rest with the churches and the preachers to see that the Sunday laws we have are enforced by the police, lazily dodge the issue and care not how the matter goes, saying it is none of their business?"

"But suppose you say the saloons are beyond your power. That does not release you from doing what is in your power, easily, to prevent this day from being trampled under foot and made like every other day in its scramble after money and pleasure. Who owns these fruit stands and cigar stores and meat markets and who patronize them? Is it not true that church members encourage these places by purchasing of them on the Lord's day? I have been told by one of these fruit dealers with whom I have talked lately that among his best customers on Sunday are some of the most respected members of this church. It has also been told me that in the summer time the heaviest patronage of the Sunday ice cream business is from the church members of Milton. Of what value is it that we place on our ordinance books forbidding the sale of these things covered by the law? How far are we responsible for our example for encouraging the breaking of the day on the part of those who would find it unprofitable to keep the day sacred, going if we did not purchase of them on this day?"

"It is possible there are very many persons here in this house this morning who are ready to exclaim: 'This is intolerable bigotry and puritanical narrowness. This is not the attitude Christ would take on this question. He was too large minded. He was too far advanced in thought to make the day to mean anything of that sort.'"

"But let us consider what is meant by the Sunday of our modern life as Christ would view it. There is no disputing the fact that the age is material, rushing, money making. For six days men are absorbed in the pursuit of money or fame or pleasure. Then God strikes the note of his silence in among the clashing sounds of earth's Babel and calls mankind to make a day unlike the other days. It is his merciful thoughtfulness for the race which has created this special day for men. Is it too much to ask that on this one day men think of something else besides politics, stocks, business, amusement? Is God forbidding the man the pleasure of life when here he gives the man six days

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"I hardly expected to see you again," said the man who had shot Philip, looking at him with a mixture of surprise and contempt.

"There is plenty of it," answered Philip gravely.

Philip gravely. "A minister must be made of cast iron and be irick in order to stand the wear and tear of these times in which we live. I'd like a week to trade ideas with you and talk over the work, Alfred."

"You'd get the worst of the bargain."

"I don't know about that. I'm not doing any thinking lately. But now, as we're going to be only 50 miles apart, what's to hinder an exchange once in awhile?"

"I'm agreeable to that," replied Philip's chum; "on condition, however, that you furnish me with a gun and pay all surgeon's bills when I occupy your pulpit."

"Done," said Philip, with a grin. And just then Mrs. Strong forbade any more talk. Alfred said until the evening train, and when he left he stooped down and kissed Philip's cheek. "It's a custom we learned when in the German universities together that summer after college, you know," he explained, with the slightest possible blush, when Mrs. Strong came in and caught him in the act. It seemed to her, however, like an affecting thing that two big, grown up men like her husband and his old chum should show such tender affection for each other. The love of men for men in the strong friendship of school and college life is one of the marks of human divinity.

CHAPTER VI.

In spite of his determination to get out and do his duty, the first Sunday of the next month Philip was reluctantly obliged to let five Sundays go by before he was able to preach. During those six weeks his attention was called to a subject which he felt ought to be made the theme of one of his talks on "Christ and Modern Society."

When he was which he had for reading the opened his eyes to the fact that Sunday in Milton was terribly desecrated. Shops of all kinds stood wide open. Excursion trains ran into the large city 40 miles away, two theaters were always running with some variety show, and the saloons, in violation of an ordinance forbidding it, unblushingly during these days did a large business on that day than any other. As Philip read the papers he noticed that every Monday morning the police court was more crowded with "drunks" and "disorderlies" than on any other day in the week, and the plain cause of it was the abuse of the day before.

In the summer time baseball games were played in Milton on Sunday. In the fall and winter very many people spent their evenings in card playing or aimlessly strolling up and down the main street. These facts came to Philip's knowledge gradually, and he was not long in making up his mind that Christ would not keep silent before the facts. So he carefully prepared a plain statement of his belief in Christ's standing on the modern use of Sunday, and as on the other occasions when he had spoken the first Sunday in the month he cast out of his reckoning all thought of the consequences.

His one purpose was to do just as, in his thought of Christ, he would do with that subject.

The people in Milton thought that the first Sunday Philip appeared in his pulpit he would naturally denounce the saloon again. But when he finally recovered sufficiently to preach he determined that for awhile he would say nothing in the way of sermons against the whisky evil. He had a whole crowd of seeming to ride a hobby, of being a man of one idea and making people tired of him because he harped on one string. He had uttered his denunciation, and he would wait a little before he spoke again. The whisky power was not the only bad thing in Milton that needed to be attacked. There were other things which must be said. And so Philip slipped into his pulpit the third Sunday of the month and preached on a general theme, to the disappointment of a great crowd almost as large as the last one he had faced. And yet his very appearance was a sermon in itself against the institution he had held up to public condemnation at that occasion. His knee wound proved very stubborn, and he limped badly. That in itself spoke eloquently of the dastardly attempt on his life. His face was pale, and he had grown thin. His shoulder was stiff, and the enforced quietness of his delivery contrasted strangely with his customary fiery eloquence on the platform. Altogether that first Sunday of his reappearance in his pulpit was a stronger sermon against the saloon than anything he could have spoken or written.

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"There is plenty of it," answered Philip gravely.

ET the opinion of the man behind the brush. Ask the experienced, practical painter, the man who served an apprenticeship and has thoroughly mastered his trade, what is the best and most durable paint. He will tell you pure "old Dutch process" White Lead.

The brands in margin are genuine and may be relied upon.

For colors use National Lead Company's Pure White Lead Tinting Colors. Any shade desired is readily obtained. Pamphlet giving full information and showing samples of colors, also pamphlet entitled "Uncle Sam's Experience With Paints" forwarded upon application.

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